



OFFICIAL MEDIA RELEASE

KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sheriff's Department to Add Four School Resource Officers in 2014-15 School Year

GRAND RAPIDS – The Kent County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted this morning (6/26) to approve contracts between the Kent County Sheriff Department and four local school districts, to provide one School Resource Officer (SRO) for each district. The SROs will work to improve school safety by investigating school related incidents and will take a proactive approach to improve security of the campus, staff and students.

So far, Byron Center Public Schools, Kent City Community Schools and Kenowa Hills Public Schools have agreed to the SRO contracts. Lowell Area Schools are currently working with a community partner to fund their position and hopes to formally commit in the coming weeks.

"Public safety is one of the fundamental services that government provides," says Kent County Board of Commissioners Chairman Dan Koorndyk. "This is a great example of collaboration between the Sheriff and the school districts.

Northview and Forest Hills Public School districts currently have a long-standing partnership with the Kent County Sheriff Department through the SRO program.

"Sadly, we've seen many tragedies occur in schools across the nation over the past 15 years," says Sheriff Larry Stelma. "We've also seen countless incidents where officers working inside schools have prevented attacks or crimes on campus. SROs can provide early intervention, security, and long-term solutions for existing safety concerns."

The school district will pay 70 percent of the costs of the officer, with the Sheriff Department General Fund Budget providing for the remaining 30 percent. All other expenses (remaining vehicle, equipment, and operating costs) will be provided for via the cost allocation plan and absorbed by the County's General Fund.

In addition to the sheriff department, the Byron Center School district is collaborating with Byron Township to fund the SRO position. The Byron Center SRO will be Deputy Andy Jonkman.

In addition to the sheriff department, the Kent City School District is collaborating with both the Village of Kent City and Tyrone Township to fund the SRO position. The Kent City SRO will be Deputy Scott Cook.

Kenowa Hills Public Schools are funding the position using district funds and the sheriff department's contribution. The Kenowa Hills SRO will be Deputy Tim Erhardt.

Several other districts have expressed interest in the program.

Positions will go into effect prior to the start of the school year however; specific dates are to be determined.

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